

Postcolonialism

The post-colonial direction was created as colonial countries became independent. Nowadays, aspects of post-colonialism can be found not only in history, literature and politics, but also in approach to culture and identity of both the countries that were colonised and the former colonial powers. Post-colonialism can take the colonial time as well as the time after colonialism into consideration.

In a literal sense, "post-colonial" is that which has been preceded by colonization. The second college edition of The American Heritage Dictionary defines it as "of, relating to, or being the time following the establishment of independence in a colony". It deals with the cultural identity matters of colonised societies, the dilemmas of developing a national identity after colonial rule. Post-colonialism has increasingly become an object of scientific examination since 1950 when Western intellectuals began to get interested in the "Third World countries". In the 1970s, this interest led to an integration of discussions about post-colonialism in various study courses at American Universities. Nowadays it also plays a remarkable role at European Universities.

Post-colonial critics have highlighted that Western representations of third world countries are no "objective" descriptions but constructions that serve the colonizers' interests. They look at literature produced by authors from both sides. In literature written by white oppressors, they examine the ways in which stereotypes are constructed. In literature written by the colonized, they analyse the ways in which these people negotiate their identities in the context of colonial domination and afterwards.

As a result of nowadays global migration and multiculturalism, there are many interactions between people from different ethnic backgrounds. And the old stereotypes still exist. In many Western societies, immigrant minorities are still regarded as less civilized and as less capable than the white native population. The practice of regarding Western culture as more valuable than other cultures is called eurocentrism. For even if a colony gains its political independence, the impact of the colonial power cannot simply be undone. The national and cultural identity of a former colony will never be able to fully recover from the views and values that were imposed on its people. As these people are torn between two cultures, the culture of their ancestors and the culture of their former occupiers, they often have a double or hybrid identity. Immigrants who try to integrate into the culture of their adopted country are faced with the same problem.

Even today, there are a lot of questions to answer concerning the effects of colonialism: Scientists today want to know how colonial powers were able to gain control over so large a portion of the non-Western world? What traces have been left by colonial education, science and technology in postcolonial societies? How do these traces affect decisions about development and modernization in postcolonies? Has decolonization been possible? Should decolonization proceed through an aggressive return to the pre-colonial past? How do gender, race, and class function in colonial and postcolonial discourse? Are new forms of imperialism replacing colonization and how?